You Don't Need Prime Matter: Welcome Rigid-Kooky Objects

Forthcoming in *Organon F*, Please cite published version.

Abstract

The problem of destructive change comprises two interrelated questions: (1) is there destructive change? (2) If there is, what underlies it? Classical hylomorphists argue that there is destructive change, understood as the change of primary substances, and that what underlies it is prime matter. Insofar as there is destructive change, I agree with classical hylomorphists. But there are reasons to doubt that prime matter is the underlying substratum, so I disagree with them with respect to (2). Alternatively, I propose a new version of classical hylomorphism, according to which what underlies destructive change, understood as the change of what I term "rigid-kooky" objects, is primary substance. My proposal has at least two perks. Compared to the classical account, it is relatively tolerant because it denies the historically contentious and ambiguous notion of prime matter. It is also economical because, unlike the classical account, which admits two constituency levels—one pertaining to primary substances and one to kooky objects—it admits only one constituency level, pertaining to kooky objects.

Keywords: hylomorphism, prime matter, change, substantial change, accidental unities, substance

1. Introduction

Substantial or destructive change (let us treat these as synonyms for now) occurs when a primary substance (e.g., a cat) ceases to exist and transforms into another (e.g., a pile of ashes, assuming that piles are primary substances). But how is it possible for something to be generated out of something that ceases to exist? This problem has been addressed by traditional hylomorphists. What makes substantial change possible is a metaphysical postulate they call "prime matter".[1] When a cat, for example, ceases to exist, some prime matter remains—a bare stuff, roughly what

[1] Koslicki writes: "The traditional notion of prime matter is often traced back to Aristotle's views on substantial change …" (Koslicki 2021, 106).

Plato would call a "receptacle"[2]—ready to be actualized by the subsequent substantial form, in this case *being a pile of ashes*. What is prime matter? According to Aristotle, it is that which "is itself not a particular thing or quantity or anything else by which things are defined" (*Metaphysics* 1029a20); to Zeller, that "which is nothing but can become everything" (Zeller 1897, 247); to Oderberg, that which "is not an individual and it has no parts …" (Oderberg 2022, 3). This postulate appears first in Aristotle's *Physics*, a book on the physically changing world. Ever since, it has been continuously defended and revised by Classical hylomorphists (e.g., Aquinas) and Neo-Classical ones (e.g., Stump 2003; Brower 2014; Oderberg 2007; 2022; Skrzypek 2024).[3] The aim of this paper is to motivate a new version of classical hylomorphism, one which explains destructive change in the absence of prime matter. The general outline is as follows:

> In §2, I introduce basic hylomorphist tenets. In §3, I explain the problem of destructive change and argue that the postulation of prime matter only aggravates the issue. In §4, I propose an alternative solution deaf to prime matter, a solution that is relatively tolerant and economical. In §5, I conclude the paper.

2. Hylomorphism and prime matter

[2] See *Timaeus* 48c–53c.

[3] The hylomorphism I focus on in this paper is Classical or neo-Classical hylomorphism. Therefore, I set aside what is known as Neo-Aristotelian or Mereological Hylomorphism (see e.g., Koslicki 2006; 2008; 2021; Fine 1999). Indeed, mereological hylomorphists typically reject prime matter. Writes Koslicki:

> "In defending a conception of matter that is able to capture the explanatory roles played by this notion in a hylomorphic account, hylomorphists have at least the following three options. First, the matter composing a hylomorphic compound can be construed along the lines of the traditional notion of "prime matter". The second option is to posit an ontological distinction between things or objects, on the one hand, and stuff, on the other hand, and to place the matter composing hylomorphic compounds in the second camp. According to the third approach, the matter composing a concrete particular object is analyzed not as prime matter or stuff, but rather as nothing more than the object's material parts which are themselves taken to be matter-form compounds and therefore to belong to the same ontological category, viz., that of concrete particular objects, as the whole they compose … Among the three options just cited, I have opted for the third, hylomorphic conception of matter in favor of the other two alternatives" (Koslicki 2021, 106).

Hylomorphism resembles the contemporary doctrine of bare particularism.[4] Both substratum theories champion a kind of substratum, and both incorporate a realist constituent ontology.[5] According to bare particularism, concrete particular objects are constituted by bare particulars[6] and universals *tout court*. According to hylomorphism, they are constituted by prime matter and *essential* universals or what hylomorphists call "substantial forms".[7] For example, while bare particularists say that a cat is constituted by a bare particular and accidental universals like *hairiness* as well as essential universals like *cathood*, hylomorphists say that it is constituted by prime matter and "only" *cathood*. Call this hylomorphic constitution of primary substances:

0-Constituency. A primary substance is constituted by prime matter and a substantial form.

Unlike bare particularists, however, hylomorphists allow another constituency level. There is, as we just saw, the *bottom* constituency which includes prime matter and a substantial form, the combination of which gives rise to a primary substance. And there is the *upper* constituency which includes a primary substance and an accidental form, the combination of which gives rise to what hylomorphists call an "accidental unity" or a "kooky object":

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[4] Proponents of bare particularism include: Alston (1954), Allaire (1963), Addis (1967); Bergmann (1967), Armstrong (1989), Moreland (1998), Sider (2006), Pickavance (2014), Wildman (2015), Paoletti (2023).

[5] Some believe that Aquinas's version of hylomorphism adopts a nominalist constituent ontology, while others believe differently. Here, I will simply assume that his account is realist. Witness Leftow:

> "Aquinas' theory of attributes is one of the most obscure, controversial parts of his thought. There is no agreement even on so basic a matter as where he falls in the standard scheme of classifying such theories: to Copleston, he is a resemblance-nominalist; to Armstrong, a 'concept nominalist'; to Edwards and Spade, 'almost as strong a realist as Duns Scotus'; to Gracia, Pannier, and Sullivan, neither realist nor nominalist; to Hamlyn, the Middle Ages' 'prime exponent of realism,' although his theory adds elements of nominalism and 'conceptualism'; to Wolterstorff, just inconsistent" (Leftow 2003, 1).

[6] Bare particulars, Bergmann writes, "neither are nor have natures. Any two of them are not intrinsically but only numerically different. That is their bareness. It is impossible for a bare particular to be 'in' more than one ordinary thing … A bare particular is a mere individuator … It does nothing else" (Bergmann 1967, 24–25).

[7] The precise nature of substantial forms is currently a hot issue. For example, Rea (2011) takes substantial forms to be unifying powers; Marmodoro (2013) takes them to be space of possibilities. And Yates (2025) takes them to be geometric structures. Here, I naively read substantial forms as substantial or essential universals.

1-Constituency. A kooky object is constituted by a primary substance and an accidental form.[8]

Where is substantial change in all of this? According to hylomorphists, substantial change occurs, not in *1-Constituency*, but in *0-Constituency*. Does *1-Constituency* involves another type of change? Yes. It is what hylomorphists call "accidental change"—that type of change which involves no destruction, what Lowe (2006, 275) also calls the "qualitative change", such as the change in which a cat, 'CAT', goes from *being hairy* to *being groomed*. For better illustration, during accidental change, CAT loses *hairiness* over *being groomed*. CAT survives and the kooky object 'Hairy-CAT' perishes. CAT, behaving as a substratum, exits 'Hairy-CAT' and enters a new kooky object 'Groomed-CAT'. During substantial change, however, CAT perishes, as opposed to its prime matter which survives being a constituent of another primary substance, in this case a pile of ashes 'ASH'.

Again, hylomorphists postulate prime matter to solve the problem of substantial change. Let this be:

0-Postulation. Prime matter is postulated to solve the problem of substantial change.

Note that *0-Postulation* is related to *0-Constituency*. The latter depends on the former. If we do not "postulate" prime matter, then primary substances will not be "constituted" by prime matter.

In this paper, I argue that *0-Postulation* leads to an impasse, and that if no *0-Postulation*, then no *0-Constituency*. We are left with *1-Constituency*. I ask: is destructive change solvable via *1-Constituency*? I answer in the positive. The conclusion I make in this paper is that we do not need prime matter to solve destructive change. What is more, this conclusion turns out to be attractive. Since prime matter is, as many would say, historically contentious and ambiguous, and since explaining change in general (the non-destructive one like CAT's changing from *being hairy* to *being groomed*, and the destructive one like CAT's changing from *being a cat* to *being a pile of ashes*) via "two" levels of constituency is uneconomical, and since my proposal, according to which destructive change is solvable via *1-Constituency*, denies prime matter and explains both

[8] More on kooky objects, refer to Matthew (1982), Lewis (1982, 29), and Cohen (2008).

kinds of changes via only one level of constituency, it follows that my proposal is relatively tolerant and economical, and, for that reason, should be taken seriously.

3. Prime matter: nowhere to turn!

First, what is the problem of substantial change exactly? In my view, it comprises two interrelated sub-problems. The first can be formulated in terms of what I term *The Existence Question*: is there substantial change? The second can be formulated in terms of what I term *The Persistence Question*: if there is substantial change, then what is the nature of its continuant substratum?[9] Hylomorphists answer *The Existence Question* in the positive. There is substantial change, say they, on the Aristotelian grounds that it is simply impossible for some primary substance to be generated out of absolute nothingness. Writes Oderberg:

> "The quasi-creation and quasi-destruction that occur in the ordinary course of nature are familiar to both physicist and metaphysician: both the combustion of wood to particles of ash, and the decay of a muon into an electron, an electron antineutrino, and a muon neutrino, are instances of the same general process of substantial transformation. None of the entities involved reduces to absolute nothingness: energy/prime matter are simply transformed, literally, by the taking on of new forms and the 'reduction', to use the Scholastic term, of the old forms back to potentiality" (Oderberg 2022, 8).

Proponents of anti-substantial change have several ways to defend themselves. For example, they might argue that primary substances can be generated out of absolute nothingness because miracles are possible. Arguing as such, they need not answer the *Persistence Question*. In their view, *nothing* persists after the destruction of primary substances: the generation of primary substances are grounded in miraculous states of affairs. By contrast, hylomorphists, who believe that substantial change is possible, must answer *The Persistence Question*. In their view, *something* persists after the destruction of primary substances: the generation of primary substances are grounded in the persisting thing at issue. What is that persisting thing? Prime matter.[10]

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[9] Others, like Kronen et al, call this complex problem of substantial change "… the problem of the continuant … Traditionally the problem is set up so it looks as if it first must be settled whether there is substantial generation; that settled, by whatever argument, one then goes on to analyze the subject of the transformation" (Kronen et al 2000, 863–64).

[10] Oderberg's following quote summarizes the position of hylomorphists toward the two questions:

One is tempted to suppose that prime matter, like any other substratum, explains identity through change. For example, just like CAT, as a substratum, explains the supposition that Hairy-CAT and Groomed-CAT are one and the same, one might suppose that the prime matter left after the destruction of CAT explains the supposition that ASH and CAT are one and the same. Hylomorphists tell us, though only by appealing to colloquial examples, not to take the latter supposition as true. Writes Oderberg, "… when I eat piece of celery the final products of digestion and metabolism are in no way numerically identical, either singly or collectively, to the piece of vegetable that entered my mouth" (Oderberg 2022, 4). I doubt this, however, and shall come back to it shortly.

Now is there substantial or destructive change? There is. So I agree with hylomorphists with respect to *The Existence Question*. Does prime matter explain it? I do not think so. So I disagree with hylomorphists with respect to *The Persistence Question*. I conclude that *0-Postulation*, according to which prime matter is postulated to solve substantial change, is dubious, and that therefore *0-Constituency* is dubious. To demonstrate my hearing, I assume first that prime matter explains substantial change. Then from that assumption I derive an impasse.

Let us agree with hylomorphists that when a primary substance x of kind K is destroyed, there remains a continuant prime matter to render x's change to another primary substance y of kind K^* possible. Let us agree for example that there is a prime matter$_1$ which explains why CAT which is of kind *cathood* could change to this pile of ashes, ASH, which is of kind *ashhood*. Let us illustrate this example via *0-Constituency*:

At t_1, CAT is constituted by prime matter$_1$ and *cathood*.

At t_2, ASH is constituted by prime matter$_1$ and *ash-hood*.

"Of the various arguments for prime matter, the master argument is the one from substantial change: prime matter is a necessary metaphysical postulate because without it we cannot explain real substantial change [*The Existence Question*]… when I eat piece of celery the final products of digestion and metabolism are in no way numerically identical, either singly or collectively, to the piece of vegetable that entered my mouth. This latter example of substantial change is, metaphysically speaking, no different to the substantial transformation of particles in microphysics [*The Persistence Question*]" (Oderberg 2022, 3–4, my brackets).

Now hylomorphists assume that ASH and CAT are numerically distinct (see Oderberg above). What makes them numerically distinct? An obvious part of what makes them so is that ASH is not a cat, nor CAT is a pile of ashes. By comparison, since Hairy-CAT and Groomed-CAT are both of kind cat, they *might* be, given certain conditions,[11] numerically identical. But since ASH and CAT fall into distinct "primary kinds", as Baker would put it,[12] this is sufficient to establish the conclusion that they are numerically distinct. So far, so good. But what of prime matter$_1$? If it is a substratum of CAT at t_1, and if it is the very same substratum of ASH at t_2, should not the conclusion also be that ASH and CAT are one in number? Compare. Hylomorphists would say that Hairy-CAT and Groomed-CAT are one in number since CAT figures as the underlying substratum of each at each time. Why a change of heart when it comes to prime matter? Hylomorphists by the way believe that a substratum of *any* change, substantial or accidental, accounts for the sameness of subject over time. Consider what Brower has to say on Aquinas's general account of change:

> "… worth noting about Aquinas's general account of change is that the notions of matter, form, and compound it employs are (at least in the first instance) purely functional in nature. To be matter, on this account, is just to be an entity playing a certain function or role—that of accounting for the sameness involved in change (namely, sameness of subject over time)" (Brower 2011, 87).

But if matter, prime or otherwise qualified, accounts for the sameness involved in change, then CAT and ASH are ultimately one and the same subject. Perhaps hylomorphists will say that they are not on the grounds that whereas in accidental change CAT is a *particular*, in substantial change prime matter$_1$ is a *non-particular*.[13] And so while we can sensibly say that Hairy-CAT and

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[11] If they also have the same substratum and accidental universals.

[12] "For any x, we can ask: What most fundamentally is x? The answer will be what I call x's 'primary kind'. Everything that exists is of exactly one primary kind—e.g., a horse or a passport or a cabbage. An object's primary kind goes hand in hand with its persistence conditions. And since its primary-kind property determines what a thing most fundamentally is, a thing has its primary-kind property essentially: It could not exist without having its primary-kind property (Baker 2002, 33–4).

[13] Writes Koslicki,

> "… prime matter is in and of itself not a particular thing nor does it belong to any of the other Aristotelian categories by which being is determined (viz., quality, quantity, etc.); it lacks an essence, since neither positive nor negative attributes belong to it in virtue of itself or its own nature … it is purely potential and

Groomed-CAT are ultimately one and the same subject or particular, we cannot sensibly say that CAT and ASH are ultimately one and the same non-particular. But if this is the reason, then it is not a good one. Numerical identity is not exclusive to particulars. Non-particular universals are numerically identical. Whatever the non-particularity of prime matter boils down to, then, nothing seems to prevent CAT and ASH from being regarded as one and the same. But if this is granted, and I do not see why it should not, it would be incoherent to maintain that CAT and ASH are *numerically distinct* via the fact that they comprise distinct substantial forms, yet *numerically identical* via the fact that they comprise the same prime matter. The destroyed and the generated primary substance must be *either* numerically identical *or* distinct. Two available options before hylomorphists:

> (A) Hylomorphists could deny that prime matter explains identity through change, and admit that two things having different substantial forms is sufficient to explain their numerical distinction. In which case, the destroyed and the generated primary substance come out numerically distinct *simpliciter*.
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> (B) Hylomorphists could admit that prime matter explains identity through change, and deny that two things having different substantial forms is sufficient to explain their numerical distinction. In which case, the destroyed and the generated primary substance come out numerically identical *simpliciter*.

Since hylomorphists themselves agree that substrata in general account for identity through change (see Brower above), they should want to opt for (B) rather than (A). If they do, however, they should accept that substantial forms like *cathood* and *ashhood* do not necessarily explain numerical distinction. Thus they should accept that ASH and CAT are ultimately one and the same subject despite the fact that the former is a pile of ash and the latter is a cat. But this outcome seems to suggest that substantial forms behave much like accidental forms. For example, just like CAT remains one and the same when it loses *being hairy* for *being groomed*, it also remains one and the same when it loses *cathood* for *ashhood*. So, if hylomorphists opt for (B), they should accept that

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cannot on its own exist actually; and, due to the fact that prime matter lacks an essence, it is therefore also in itself unknowable" (Koslicki 2021, 107; c.f. Oderberg 2022, 3).

there is no genuine difference between substantial and accidental forms, or, more precisely, should accept a Quinean anti-essentialist stance and deny the privilege substantial forms have over accidental ones.[14] Hylomorphists, however, are essentialists *par excellence*. Brower, for example, writes:

> "… we can truly describe [lump] as a sphere at one time and a statue at another. Note, however, that the same cannot be said to hold of substantial changes, such as that involved in our human example. For a human to be generated from a zygote, there must be something—namely, some prime matter—that goes from *possessing zygotehood* to *possessing humanity*. Even so, such prime matter cannot itself be said to go from *being a zygote* to *being a human*. That is to say, we can't truly describe it as a zygote at one time and a human at another. And the reason has to do at least partly with the nature of the substantial forms or properties. Unlike *sphericity* or *statuehood*, *humanity* is not the sort of form or property that can characterize its possessor accidentally. On the contrary, it is a form or property that characterizes its possessor essentially: if something is *human* at any time it exists, it must be *human* at all (possible) times it exists. For the same reason, Aquinas thinks, it makes no sense to speak of something *coming-to-be* human—and likewise for *zygotehood* or any of the other forms involved in substantial change" (Brower 2011, 90).

What is so bad about construing substantial forms as accidental? It certainly challenges our everyday intuitions. It invites us to doubt that these particular human beings are *essentially* human beings, and that these particular cats are *essentially* cats. It invites us to answer questions like 'what is Socrates?', not in terms of 'Socrates is a human being', but in terms of 'Socrates is potentially everything'.[15] Let us agree with hylomorphists that such invitations are below par. But if they are not ready to deny substantial forms, then they must be ready to opt for (A) instead of (B). Yet opting for (A) involves the denial of substrata as entities that explain identity through change, something hylomorphists admit rather than deny.

Succinctly, if (A), no identity through change; if (B), no substantial forms; if neither (A) nor (B), then the transformed and the generated primary substance are numerically identical and distinct. Such impasse is arrived at by means of the traditional hylomorphic answers to *The Existence*

[14] As W. V. Quine observes, essentialists have this "invidious attitude toward certain ways of uniquely specifying *x* … as somehow better revealing the essence of the object" (Quine 1953, 155).

[15] For a systematic discussion see Sullivan (2016).

Question and *The Persistence Question*. Hylomorphists answer the former by saying that there is substantial change. And they answer the latter by postulating prime matter as the continuant of substantial change. If these answers lead to an impasse, the hylomorphist is called upon to put aside *0-Postulation*, according to which prime matter is postulated to solve substantial change, and thereby *0-Constituency*, according to which prime matter together with substantial forms constitute primary substances. The hylomorphist is called upon to entertain two possibilities: destructive change is explainable either via *0-Constituency* by way of postulating entities other than prime matter, or via *1-Constituency* alone. I think that the former option is not a desideratum. Instead of postulating further obscurities, one is better off to consider whether *1-Constituency* can do the job. This option, as far as I know, has never been considered. I consider it here and motivate it against the classical hylomorphic account.

4. Kooky change and rigid-kooky objects

As an answer to *The Existence Question*, there is destructive change. But I do not understand the destructive transformation of, say, CAT to ASH as a transformation from one primary substance to another. Rather, I understand it as a destructive transformation from one kind of kooky object to another. At this point, I stop treating substantial and destructive change as synonyms. I take substantial change to be merely one type, among other types, of destructive changes. It is a destructive change *with respect to primary substances*. There are other types of destructive changes. When day transforms to night, or when night transforms to day, we are probably talking about a destructive change *with respect to events*. Similarly, when an episode of happiness transforms into an episode of depression, we are probably talking about a destructive change *with respect to moods*. In addition to these types of destructive change, there is a type *with respect to kooky objects*. And I call such destructive change "kooky change." I propose that when a cat transforms into a pile of ashes, what transforms and what generates are not primary substances but particular kinds of kooky objects. Thus, as an answer to *The Persistence Question*, what underlies a kooky change is a primary substance. Let me now unpack my proposal.

Now, what is the destructive change I call kooky change? Accidental changes occur in *1-Constituency*. At this level, a primary substance and an accidental form constitute a kooky object. For example, at t_1, CAT and the accidental form *hairiness* constitute Hairy-CAT. If at a time, t, a primary substance loses an accidental form, the former but not the latter survives. For example,

suppose that at t_2, CAT loses *hairiness* for *being groomed*. In that case, CAT survives and Hairy-CAT perishes; more specifically, CAT exits Hairy-CAT and enters a new kooky object, namely Groomed-CAT, and Hairy-CAT, but not CAT, undergoes a destructive change. I call that destructive change kooky change.

Here comes the heart of my proposal. Why not also add that primary substances can, as well, enter different kinds of kooky objects—objects we can term "rigid-kooky objects," such as 'Cat-CAT,' 'Ash-CAT,' 'Human-Socrates,' 'Frog-Socrates,' etc., as opposed to those like Hairy-CAT, Groomed-CAT, and 'Seated-Socrates,' which we can term "slack-kooky objects"? In this way, when we say that a cat is destroyed and a pile of ashes is generated, we mean to say that a rigid-kooky object, Cat-CAT, is destroyed and a pile of the rigid-kooky object, Ash-CAT, is generated. There is certainly ongoing destruction and generation! When CAT loses *cathood* over *ashhood*, it survives by exiting the destroyed rigid-kooky object, Cat-CAT, and entering the new rigid-kooky object, Ash-CAT. Before I demonstrate how my proposal avoids the impasse above and how attractive it is compared to the original hylomorphist version, let me make an important distinction between rigid-kooky and slack-kooky objects with respect to kooky change.

According to hylomorphists, kooky objects coincide with primary substances for a while.[16] Thus at t_1, CAT and Hairy-CAT coincide. Once we accept the possibility for 'two' things to coincide, nothing prevents us from also accepting the possibility for 'two or more' things to coincide. Hylomorphists accept that there are numerous coincidentals. So, if CAT at t_1 is hairy, grey, sleepy, and seated, then there are four slack-kooky objects coinciding with CAT at t_1, namely, Hairy-CAT, 'Grey-CAT', 'Sleepy-CAT', and 'Seated-CAT.' To this, I add that rigid-kooky objects can also coincide with primary substances and slack-kooky objects. Thus, at t_1, Cat-CAT coincides with CAT and the other four slack-kooky objects. Now, there is a crucial difference between a primary substance coinciding with a rigid-kooky object and it coinciding with a slack-kooky object. The difference is this: the former, but not the latter, involves a deep intimacy. That is, a primary substance like CAT coincides with a rigid-kooky object like Cat-CAT for a *long period of time*. Hence the term "rigid." By contrast, a primary substance like CAT coincides with a slack-kooky object like Hairy-CAT or Seated-CAT for *a short period of time*. Hence the term "slack." We can call these coincidences respectively "rigid-coincidence" and "slack-coincidence." Such

[16] See Cohen (2008, 4) and Pickavance (2014, 99).

coincidences explain why primary substances retain a particular form for a good while, while losing others in a flash.

My proposal avoids the impasse in section 3. Hylomorphists, who explain destructive change—understood as a destructive transformation of primary substances—reach the trilemma that the destroyed and the generated primary substance are numerically identical and distinct; if only identical, no substantial forms; and if only distinct, prime matter is unable to explain identity through change. My proposal, which explains destructive change—understood as a destructive transformation of kooky objects— does not reach such roadblock. For, *1-Constituency*, the level at which kooky changes occur, consists, not of prime matter and substantial form, but of primary substance and accidental form. Here, the primary substance, being the substratum, accounts for identity through change, and so the destroyed and the generated rigid-kooky object are ultimately one and the same subject, e.g., Ash-CAT and Cat-CAT are one and the same ultimate subject, CAT. Moreover, the rigid-kooky objects are not numerically distinct via the supposition that each falls under a distinct primary kind or substantial form. For, again, such objects are not constituted by substantial forms. Ash-CAT is constituted by the accidental form *ashhood* and Cat-CAT by *cathood*.

One pressing objection may be that my proposal wrongly reduces substantial forms to accidental forms. For example, it treats *cathood* as accidental, yet *cathood* is clearly substantial. This objection would be correct absent some clarification on my part. Once my proposal is clarified, the objection will lose some of its force.

Recall that the original hylomorphist account involves two constituencies, each containing a particular type of form. In *0-Constituency*, there are substantial forms. In *1-Constituency*, there are accidental forms. My proposal denies *0-Constituency*. Does that mean I deny substantial forms? No. Then what happens to them? I locate them in *1-Constituency*. Does that mean that kooky objects are now constituted by primary substances, substantial forms, and accidental forms? No, for it depends on which kooky object is under discussion. If we are talking about slack-kooky objects, then each of these is constituted by a primary substance and an accidental form (e.g., *hairiness*). If we are talking about rigid-kooky objects, then each of these is constituted by a primary substance and a substantial form (e.g., *cathood*).

Still, one might correctly observe that my account undermines the distinction between substantial and accidental forms. For whether we are discussing slack-kooky or rigid-kooky objects, both are destroyed when their associated form is destroyed. Hairy-CAT perishes once *hairiness* perishes, and Cat-CAT perishes once *cathood* perishes. My account controversially takes *hairiness* to be as substantial as *cathood*, and *cathood* as accidental as *hairiness*.

I submit. And for this reason, I choose to construe the nature of forms as *context-sensitive*, in the sense that their substantiality or accidentality entirely depends on the subject under discussion. If primary substances are the context, then forms are accidental. If kooky objects are the context, then forms are essential. So instead of *1-Constituency*, I propose:

> *1-Constituency**. A kooky object is constituted by a primary substance and a *context-sensitive* form.

For example, Hairy-CAT is constituted by CAT and context-sensitive *hairiness*, such that the latter is accidental with respect to CAT, but substantial with respect to Hairy-CAT. Similarly, Cat-CAT is constituted by CAT and context-sensitive *cathood*, such that the latter is accidental with respect to CAT, but substantial with respect to Cat-CAT. But if *1-Constituency**, then I do not undermine the distinction between substantial and accidental forms, for such forms are *not* context-free.[17]

My new version of classical hylomorphism has its perks. For one, traditional hylomorphism takes the nature of forms to be context-free. Thus it considers *cathood* to be substantial *simpliciter* and *hairiness* accidental *simpliciter*. However, this construal faces difficulties when considering how subjects have their forms. In this traditional view, one is allowed to say that a primary substance has its substantial form substantially (e.g., CAT has its substantial form, *cathood*, substantially) and its accidental form accidentally (e.g., CAT has its accidental form, *hairiness*,

[17] The idea of having a form accidentally or essentially bears resemblance to the distinction proposed by bare particularists, namely, between internal exemplification (having a property essentially) and external exemplification (having a property accidentally). See Alston (1954, 257); Connell (1988, 90); Moreland (1998, 257); Pickavance (2014). Using that distinction, Cat-CAT would internally exemplify cathood, while CAT would externally exemplify it.

accidentally). This double-having of forms can be problematic,[18] and it is, above all, convoluted compared to an account that admits only the single-having of forms. My proposal, which takes the nature of forms to be context-sensitive, eliminates the double-having. A primary substance has a form accidentally, while a kooky object has a form substantially.

For two, my version explains kooky change—whether rigid-kooky change or slack-kooky change—by considering only one level of constituency, namely, *1-Constituency*. This is economical. Traditional hylomorphism, in contrast, is uneconomical in this respect.

Finally, my version denies prime matter, an exceedingly contentious postulate. Thus, my version is exceedingly tolerant.

5. Conclusion

I admit that entities like cats and atoms undergo destructive transformations, but I deny that these entities are primary substances. Therefore, I deny what hylomorphists call substantial change. I proposed that we construe such entities as kinds of kooky objects—objects I termed rigid-kooky objects. I suggested that we substitute rigid-kooky change for substantial change. This proposal has its share of attractions. Compared to mainstream hylomorphism, my version is economical (it explains destructive change using only *1-Constituency*) and exceptionally tolerant (it denies prime matter, which has historically been contentious and ambiguous).

To be sure, my version is not without obscurities. For one, it takes primary substances to be bare particulars—particulars devoid of their own forms. Recall that CAT is not itself *being a cat* or *being hairy*; such forms characterize rigid-kooky objects and slack-kooky objects, respectively. But is it plausible to construe primary substances as bare particulars? Such an identification has been proposed recently. Connolly (2015), for example, takes primary substances to be identical to bare particulars. The difference between his view and mine, however, is that, whereas he denies that bare particulars/primary substances are constituents of anything, I admit that they are constituents of slack-kooky and rigid-kooky objects. Are both views implausible, given their identification of primary substances with bare particulars? And if such identification is acceptable,

[18] See e.g., Bailey (2012).

then which view is more palatable—Connolly's or mine? These issues are for another day. Today, I bid farewell to the long-standing prime matter and the long-standing 0-Constituency.[19]

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[19] The central ideas of this paper would not have emerged sans the guidance of David Yates and Bruno Jacinto, to whom I am profoundly grateful.

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